Soft targets of heart ailments

†1535. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report which appeared in the Jansatta, dated 22nd February, 2002 in which it has been stated that the number of heart-patients is higher amongst the pre-natals in the case of women who are living in metropolitan cities/urban areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the groups of doctors of University of California, Los Angles School of Public Health and California Birth Defects Monitoring Programme has stated that it will lead to grave consequences, if it is taken lightly; and

(d) Government's reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In a study conducted by researchers in California, USA, the authors have evaluated the effect of air pollution on the occurrence of birth defects and have found that pregnant women exposed to air pollution are at higher risk of having babies with congenital heart disease.

(c) and (d) This is first study of its kind. Therefore, investigators were enable to look at other risks factors for birth defects, including maternal smoking, occupational exposures, vitamin supplement use, diet and obesity. Moreover, the researchers admit the study is limited because it could only assess pregnant women's exposures to pollutants by checking measurement of certain pollutants at monitoring stations which could be up to ten miles away.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.